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permafrost

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Table of Contents

John Haines	8
Ron Crowe	11
Elliot Fried	12
Lyric Ozburn (stone lithograph)	17
M.R. Waggoner	18
Carol Knapp Johnson	19
Kari Tarrant	20
Tom Farrar (short story)	21
Ann Fox Chandonnet	23
L.E. Leonard (short story)	26-35
John Gilbert (artwork)	36
Elyse Guttenberg	37
Bob Forbes	38
Serena Fae Morgan	41
J. Farwell	42
Morgan Jane Wills	44
Sutton Hoo War Helmet (photo)	46
Marijane Osborn (criticism)	47-50
Marijane Osborn (poem)	51
Robert B. Weeden	52
Jean Anderson	54
John Gilbert (artwork)	55
Tom Lowenstein	56
Gary G. Holthaus	58
Dave Stark	60
Elyse Guttenberg (photo)	inside back cover

This issue of permafrost is dedicated to Tom Farrar, a staff member, who was injured in a logging accident and died June 14, 1977.

"Art completes what Nature cannot bring to a finish. The artist gives us a knowledge of Nature's unrealized ends."

—Aristotle

From a letter to Sandy McCauley:

June 1977

It's been just a lovely day out here—constantly raining and storming all day, and now the fog is rolling in. I've been miserably soaking wet since early this morning, wading in mud all day up to my knees. Throughout this day I've been questioning my existence on this fateless planet, only to deduce the fact that I'm in love with this universe, and overwhelmed by nature's magnificence. Logging is a disease, I guess, but no matter how much I curse it every morning, it always seems to maintain that winning edge over me. Yes, logging is . . . the ultimate job. The ultimate stroked-up, wired-in, unlatched, loose and lovable, sometimes violent, far-out, free-form game of man against the trees; where the logs change the rules from second to second, and you either wipe-out or win in—just that fast.

Tom Farrar

RICHARDSON: THE DREAM

It is night in midwinter on the Richardson road. Snow is falling, and there is snow on the roadway. The road, narrow and winding, is brushed in on either side by willows and birches. The right-of-way has not been cleared for many years.

A light wind blowing out of Delta sweeps the flakes along; they fall on the unmarked roadway. No cars have passed for hours and days, not for many weeks. It has been snowing for a long time; the snow is light and dry, the kind of snow a man may easily walk through, the snow blowing aside in his passage.

The figure of a man approaches, walking west on the road, toward Richardson. He is bundled in a loose and baggy parka, in the style men used to wear: an outer garment like a shell, breaking the wind.

He comes on past the old Doherty cabin, pushing aside the loose and drifting snow as he walks. He peers before him into the darkness. It may be Hans. No, it is Melvin. Perhaps, then, it is Hirshberger—he would be walking from that direction; it would be he, of course. We cannot tell. His face is hidden within the hood of his parka. A stranger, and yet he knows his way.

The roadhouse looms before him in the snow-filled darkness. There are no lights there anywhere, not in the house nor in the yard. There is no smoke from the chimney, but a little snow lies crusted on the cap of the stovepipe.

He mounts the open porch, kicking snow from the steps. He stands before a door, he knocks and listens. There is no sound in answer; no dog barks, no light comes on within.

He goes to one of the tall windows, leans there and looks inside, his forearm resting on the framing. He knocks again on the glass.

He goes from window to window, from door to door. He knocks and listens. But there is no answer.

The old logs of the building are dusted with snow; there is snow in all the cracks and snow on the sills. But no sheeting of ice hangs heavy and gleaming from the eaves; there has been no fire in that house for a long time. No one is home.

The man stands on the porch and listens. The rough and peeling signboard creaks on its wires overhead; there is no other

sound but the wind, quiet with snow in the forest. No stars can be seen, there are no lights anywhere in the distance. The entire landscape seems dark and empty, the vast interior a place of snow and silence.

The man turns away, pulling his parka hood around him. He walks again on the road in the direction he came from, into the wind, toward Tenderfoot Hill. He disappears in the darkness. Snow closes around him, filling his tracks as he goes.

John Haines is currently writing an autobiography with the working title *Other Days* of which this is an exerpt.

FOSSIL

I

All spine and knotted fin-rays,
the great fishtail lashing
in a petrified stillness
where the seas are warm,
and life is beaked and nailed
and armed with teeth.

Caught in the green stone wave,
abundant flesh
uncoils from a spiral shell.

II

Sometimes in our sleep
this grey, carnivorous shadow,
drifting and feeding,
like the toothed smile
at the lips of living men.

A lighted spine lashing
uphill in the evening traffic,
home to the clay beds,
where night after night
the heart's wide nets are cast.

III

Inside the shell of our skulls,
pink and buoyant tissue
held by the thinnest membrane,
tasting of salt . . .

Drawn to those thirsty depths,
the great shark feeds there still.

PAUL ROBESON AND OLD DADDY

Back in Birmingham
Old Daddy used to sing along
with Paul Robeson on the phonograph—
until the nigger turned communist—Old Daddy broke
his records in the backyard and burned them
in a small fire for us and the other kids. While
the voice that made goose pimples went up
in black smoke to the heavens, Old Daddy

said he could never understand why
the nigger wasn't everlastingly grateful
for the voice God had given him,
the recognition white man had given him,
the college education they'd given him—
not even after they'd let him be a star
football player, lawyer, actor, singer—Old Daddy
shook his head like a door opening and closing
for the last time, went back to working
on his 1941 Hudson engine under the big oak tree,
side of the house, sitting on his overturned box,
dirty white shirtsleeves rolled
above his elbows.

A voice like that, he said. Nobody every had
a voice like that and he turned *communist*!
I'll never understand niggers if I live to be a hundred . . .
and he never did—either one.

Sometimes Old Daddy would forget and
sing Old Man River, dreaming he sounded like Robeson.

Elliot Fried

SAINT LOUIS

I always return

to crumbling brick thick trees and frosted lamps
Saint Louis shrinks upon itself invaded
by leavings. Either leave in haste
or stay
stuck in white familial paste.

Elderly newsboys buzz
around trashcan fires, sporting
Cardinal baseball caps.
They've hawked headlines since
PEARL HARBOR BOMBED BY JAPS.
News those days was all in caps
but that's behind them now.

In the stone Lindbergh Memorial
hangs Lindbergh's flying suit
goggles canteen and a fabric chunk
from his silver wing. Once
he flew above the city and women waved
black cloche hats. In Forest Park
the surviving buildings of the 1904
World's Fair crumble into tall grass,
losing their functions like ancient women.

Brick and thick trees.
Every year I wander here.
I stand at a weedy plot, talking
to shreds of my father.
Rain humidity dust.

The night is tangled with stars.
I drive blacktar streets, bumps

and ruts from childhood remain.
I listen to the spray of the moon.
In a drivein, food is hung
from my car. I watch lovers gorge
on smooth leatherette. I pay
and leave a modest tip.
I am my father's son.

I drive past gray porches
sagging like chins where even now
families sit swaying in the dusty dark.
Beneath the Eads Bridge
brown Mississippi sludge drags toward New Orleans
drunks huddle near crumbling black piles
pieces of dull driftwood rotting in the moon.
They do not ask for coin, they do not stare.
Their eyes are cracked, their feet are bare,
but their pockets bulge bottles. These winos
burst in chipped brick alleys like overripe
tomatoes, all innards and seeds. They nestle
like frightened pigeons in tall thin weeds.
In winter their shoulders turn to snow.
At water's edge a sunken boat.
Its smokestacks protrude like stalks
of black corn.

I always come here. I will never
come back. I kill them my family
my city my childhood my self.
I will never return to this city
of darkness and sweating tar and Clouds
Clouds Clouds that pull across the sky
like targets in a penny arcade.
I will never come back here. Never.

I always return.

Eng. 206

Come let me show you the dance of words
metrical slide and gluey rime
fluorescent euphony

at first I could not understand
why he shivered it wasn't cold
nor why he poured so much
sugar the spoon rattled the cup
then he pulled back his shirt-
sleeve showed me his arm
dead flat veins then
I said I understood

I will teach you to pick smooth skimming words
words that pock the page with their fall
words that scar

she is lonely always
her husband her lover
do not understand her
secret longings she cannot
sleep she talks of break-
downs children skin
she walks down a long green hall
she does not understand she
wants beyond words

I will teach you to knead and knead
your poems will rise fill the house
they will sound delicious

faces crack like glass or ice
where you just stepped age
furrows the eyes
and I dispense inject
shock in the hot
white room patients quiver
momentarily alive what

then? do they stick
to the anthracitic walls
of that long loose tunnel
that tightens with time?
Can words chisel stone
into a warm black snow?
they heal slice
killer cure
like the slasher who binds what he cuts
with the flesh of the wound he has made

Come let me show you the dance of words

SKYWATCH

At his altitude
the sky was always black.
Russia
was hazy lines intersecting long green fields
sixteen miles down.
He saw the red glare
then the thin white finger
pointing
a wing dipped
too late
the sudden swoosh of a giant waterheater
his U-2 shredded away
and suddenly he was falling
him
falling
blossoming over Russia.

Elliot Fried

Eisenhower said he didn't exist
there were no U-2's over Russia
a Manufactured Incident
but there were photos of Powers
and a truckload of shattered metal
paraded thru Moscow streets.

Why didn't he self-destruct
(he carried the capsule)
or disappear?

Russian trial, Russian prison he finally
returned
unhero
Why didn't he disappear?

Now he flies a Cessna thru smog-pink sky
L.A.'s a thousand feet down
Freeways intersect the cement city.

"There's been a minor traffic accident on . . . "

Sun reflecting off the windshields
off the blocked traffic

makes him twitch
a wing dips

but he rights himself and flies on
into the darkening evening sky.



"G. Fry"

Lyric Ozburn

M.R. Waggoner

EASTER 1977
NEAR-CONVERSION

With fingers that fondle a rosary,
He eases the pearl buttons
From their restricting casements.

With breaths of holy wine,
He chants soft heady blessings
Into my quickening ear.

With that submissive tongue
That laps up the Eucharist,
He seduces
That part of me
Entombed in me
to Come Forth.

Slowly I come,
Follow the moist fingers
To one ecstatic, precarious moment.

But the moment empties itself
And I am
Depleted, detached
Patched to this dying animal.

The tender, gaping cave
Reseals itself
Promising never again
To yield to
The Mystic's hollow call.

This mortality redresses in its mortality;
This corruptible slips back on its corruption.

O life, here is thy sting:
Resurrection's but a dream.

SPELLED LEAVES

we are waiting
on the thin leaf edges
of time
on the dancing leaves

in the dark light
of eclipse
we hear the foot falls
hooves on brass

wild marchers come
we fear the drum
 the sound of breaking stems
 the pound of hooves on brass

yet we are waiting
above the fields of flicking light
we are hungry in the years
grow weary waking in the wind

we can not name the end
the wild relief
the snap

the marchers are singing
with the drum
they have come
to cut the fruit
to flense our roots

Kari Tarrant

A CATBIRD SHADOW

eaglecat
with your champagne wings
tipped steel-blue,
bring your leopard fledgling dreams to me
 see me as a cougar moon
 stalk inside my jungle
eaglecat lay your panther body on my bed
and feather me with amber-sabled gazes
 see me as a hawk-dark night
 fly within my nesting
eaglecat with your perfect animal honesty
you're born of a species never seen before
i need to know your boundaries
 eaglecat
 i want to,
 have to,
 be your catbird shadow

JODERY

I drive. Jodery's always been afraid of cars; he's just never serious or sober enough to understand them. All our gear's packed and in the trunk. We've picked up the girls for an evening out to dinner. Tomorrow morning I plan to see to it that we both make it to the airport, although Jodery couldn't care one way or the other about going back to work again. The melting snow has finally allowed the logging camp to re-open for another season, so this will be our last night in town. I pull up to the curb, park the car, and the four of us get out.

The restaurant already has a jovial atmosphere, and Jodery's drunken laughter confirms it. Between the red shag and the soft lighting, the air is full of cigarette smoke, voices, and music. Silverware, china, and glass tap against each other, thudding on colonial wood. Aprons and serving trays maneuver around heavy chairs. Eager faces, coats, a cash register wait at the door.

People are here to enjoy people, and time seems suspended. Yet this same setting has played a part in Jodery's life for the last fifteen of his thirty-five years; suspended, too, are his simple and carefree, childlike traits.

Respect draws my attention back to him, to his low and honest voice in conversation, to the straight back and broad shoulders framing his Norwegian body. He holds in one hand an iced Scotch, in the other an unfiltered Camel. His clothes and manners are always first class when he is out with Carla, or any woman, for that matter. His thick, silver hair curls down on his ears and forehead, making contrast with his dark-toned skin. His smile is cast iron, cutting the sharpness of his face, and his eyes, though still sincere, are torpored by drink.

He looks up now as the waitress serves our food; he orders another round of drinks. I focus on his eyes. Beyond the ebony, the glassiness, is a man who has seen hard times.

When he was only fifteen, his father taught him to log. He has spent his life since then as a bushler. For eight years he tried marriage and raising a son, finally discovering that he wasn't the type to settle down to life's seriousness. He's now escaping responsibility, always traveling, always looking for a change.

The steaks, when they arrive, look and smell good; we eagerly begin to eat. But Jodery shakes his head, saying that his steak is too tough. He raises his arm and, as if catching butterflies, signals a waitress. He requests, politely, that his steak be cooked longer. Then he lights another cigarette, sips his drink, and scans the room for familiar faces.

The waitress returns. Without saying a word, she places his steak on the table and leaves. Jodery stabs at the steak, makes a few short cutting motions, then drops the silverware. He mumbles a curse, requests the car keys, and says he'll be right back. We all react with surprise, uneasy over his sudden change in attitude. I assure the girls that Jodery has just had too much to drink; he wants to get some fresh air, I tell them, and be alone for awhile.

Minutes later I recognize a familiar burst of noise outside the door. Others' expressions confirm it, questioning its strangeness at this time and place. Suddenly, the door crashes open. Heads snap around, eyes freeze. Jodery strides in, clenching a screaming chain saw. People cover their ears. Confusion and noise become unbearable. He nears our table, motions for us to move away. Then slowly, smiling as if in ritual, Jodery lays the razor-sharp machine to work on his steak. Instantly meat shreds, glass shatters, wood chips fly. A table falls in two, and finally the hot steel dies.

Jodery's drunken laughter now takes over, as if celebrating an accomplishment. Others, in disbelief, join in, and immediately the room is in a roar of laughter.

This is Jodery at his best, the center of attraction— drawing laughter and surprise—cops, and a jail sentence —and a way out of work once again.

Ann Fox Chandonnet

THE WALRUS COME TO GAMBELL IN THE SPRING

Milk white
sun beats down on
ice. The young cow raises
a flipper to shade her eyes; her
calf sucks.

Egg packed
in an ice box,
ungainly walrus stabs
mumbling walrus with his sharp tusks;
“Back off!”

Man comes
in oomiak;
a senior bull sounds his
warning bell, and the pod slips from*
the floe.

Below,
Whales sing sonar
chorales, convoluted
spirals curling to ice ridges
and back.

Weightless,
ivory rakes
the sand, churning up clams,
snails, cockles. The calf hitches rides
on ma.

*The bell sound—very like that of a bell made from
a shell casing—is produced by air sacks on the sides of
the neck.

ADOPTION

(to Alex)

Two Jehovah's Witnesses in navy blue suits
come up the road,
frightening you,
and you run
to put your face
in my crotch
for solace.

You didn't come out of me,
but you keep going in.
Your smiles,
your bubbling laughs,
your falling over, delighted, with a new word,
your sidelong glance and
chin on clavicle
when you know you're being observed—
they go into me like knives.

Your whole muscular body goes soft as
a cinnamon bun sometimes.
Across the room
I see your softness.
Your face is a down parka.
The softness sinks in, into me.

Your timidity is mine,
is me as a child.
Your put on my past like a parka.
You put on my long eyelashes,
the gleaming satin nape of my neck.
You put on my soft baby feet,
my tender earlobes.

I hold myself by the hand
as the barking dog circles,
as the bush planes roar over,
the strange men come closer.
When I must rinse dirt from your eye,
I am the one screaming
upside down under the gushing faucet.
As the lump rises on your lip,
I hug myself.

Nice knives.
Come cut me up.

DEAR MOUSE

Your skittering steps
above my kitchen ceiling
as you rearrange
insulation for a nest
endear you to me. But it's

winter; I too have
tiny, hairless sons to warm.
Tomorrow, poison.

L.E. Leonard

AN EVENING BESIDE WALDEN POND

OR

A YELLOW TRUCK AND A BIG MAC IS A HARD COMBINATION TO BEAT

There is this fellow I know pretty well, who at one time was paid good money by the government to ask silly questions of strangers. Well, apparently it became a habit that he can't break because one day he asked me if I knew whatever happened to Walden Pond. "Sure," I said. And then I told him this story.

* * *

It is evening in Fairbanks and the white neon figures on the Alaska National Bank Building bleed into the haze as they flaunt the vital signs of the day: 8:45 . . . -52°. In the Goldstream Theater parking lot, the lights have turned the snow to a ghastly fluorescent purple. But it is here, over by the chain link fence, where the row of yellow pickup trucks is parked, that Walden Pond emerges like a hotdog plucked from a pushcart kettle, out of a wavering cloud of steam. But this steam is not warm and moist. This is a steam with a difference, for at this temperature the air can't support water vapor. At this temperature all vapor turns to frozen fog, instantly. And here this ice fog billows from the tailpipes of the yellow trucks. There is no one in the trucks. They idle quietly. Together they resemble a display of Harvest Gold refrigerators, all defective and leaking gas, and out of this lethal cloud comes Walden Pond.

* * *

Walden glances toward the Bank, wondering why the time and temperature are so important to banks, then regretting his ignorance of economics, continues on. He crosses the parking lot to take a place at the end of the long line of men which extends back from the doors of the theater. With the exception of Walden,

these men look pretty much alike. They are tall and slender, wearing Stetson hats and waist-length suede jackets with sheepskin linings. Their long tapered trousers are held at the waist by carved leather belts, and all wear western boots. These men all belong to the yellow trucks. The average has been running about 1.2 men per truck. The trucks belong to Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. Alyeska, as their press releases indicate, is the firm responsible for the design, construction, and maintenance of the Trans-Alaska Oil Pipeline. The carbon monoxide content of the truck exhaust is about 0.8 percent by volume. There is nothing in the Alyeska press releases that says they are responsible for air quality, and neither are its men. They are going to the movies. They will only be responsible for Papillon and Robin Crusoe USN.

* * *

By now more men have filed in behind Walden Pond. They look much like those in front. Walden is the only one destroying the continuity of the line. He is short, and huddled in a rumpled Air Force parka, worn levis, and battered white bunny boots, he has put an unattractive notch in the line. It looks like this:

TTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTnTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTTT

But if Walden doesn't fit, he tries not to show it. These men are loved by the Chamber of Commerce because they take up space and spend money. They are hated by most of the townspeople for the same reason. But Walden stays neutral. When someone meets his glance, he nods and smiles. He is wondering how they can stand there in such flimsy clothes at fifty-two below. The mere thought of it chills him and he squirms deep inside the folds of his parka. It has been nearly thirty minutes since his ride dropped him off and already the cold has begun to prick at the seams of his clothing like a hypodermic needle searching for the chance to suck out a few more cc's of heat.

An interesting idea occurs to Walden. Perhaps it is possible to store heat in the body while in the south and then have a reserve to fall back on when you come north. But the whole thing doesn't seem likely, and he looks for another answer, finding it in the yellow trucks. Whatever immunity these men have against the

cold, it must have something to do with the yellow trucks.

* * *

Up front the doors are being opened and a wave of anticipation sweeps the line. The men are preparing to move; they stiffen and suddenly become aware of their posture. But Walden is not concerned with style, only haste. There is a hole in the side of his left boot, and his toes have become numb.

Style never was one of Walden's strong points. He could remember what it was like at the air base in New Mexico; he would lie on his bunk and stare for hours at the cool green map of Alaska, as it clung to the blistered paint on the cement block wall. He had dreamed then, of entering Fairbanks in style; of driving his dusty pickup down the main street to the riverbank where an old man would be standing in the shade of a covered boardwalk in front of a log saloon. "Just come over the highway, bub?" the old timer would ask. "Com'on in, I'll buy you a drink." And Walden would spend the rest of the afternoon in the cool darkness of the bar, listening to stories of placer mines and homesteads in the bush, getting all the dope he'd need if he was going to make it on the last frontier.

In sixty-seven Walden's dream came true, with modifications. He had a brand new pickup of his own then and on the thirteenth of August he came driving down the broken pavement between the used car lots, but there was no dust; it was raining; it had been raining for days. In vain he searched for the log saloon by the river, then settled for a converted government surplus hangar called Hell's Half Acre. He did meet an oldtimer. Her name was Rita, but she could tell him nothing. The dope she had was for sale. It took several drinks for Walden's brain to resign itself to the reality of the place, and the rest of the day and the night that followed is now just a bald spot on his memory.

By morning the rain had stopped. Walden awoke with a sense of urgency. Raising his swollen cheek from the wad of newspaper that separated him from the floor, his eyes came to focus on a cherry veneer chest of drawers. There was a message awkwardly carved into the side: THIS IS MY BODY BROKEN FOR

YOU . . . REMEMBER ME. Walden got the message and jumped up, searching the room for his wallet. Through the greasy haze on the window he could see his truck in the street below. But the street was gone and in its place was a river. The men unloading the contents of the truck into a boat they had docked to the tailgate paid little attention to Walden's cries of protest, which were muffled behind the glass.

The next day Walden stood for hours in line at the insurance company claims office. The sign above the door showed a great pair of benevolent hands thrust forward with a tiny car, house, and smiling family cradled in the fleshy parts of the palm. This sign was a great comfort to Walden until it became his turn at the desk. The agent carefully explained that the flood had been an act of God, and apparently Walden's truck hadn't been insured against acts of God. He demanded to know how they could be sure a flood was an act of God. But they were sure. They had a list. They showed it to him. Floods were number twenty-three on the list.

"Theft!" Walden countered. He knew he was insured for theft. With only the slightest indication of impatience, the man carefully explained that theft during an act of God could only be considered part of the act. "Can I get insured against acts of God?" Walden asked.

"Of course, but it will cost you a lot more than you're paying now."

The next day Walden moved in with a group of hippies who lived on a hill.

* * *

As the line brings Walden closer to the door of the theater, he looks back at the row of yellow refrigerators, wondering if the inside lights go on when the doors open. Alyeska trucks are supposed to have every option you can get, including the big heaters. Walden never even got to try out the heater on his sixty-seven Ford and he hadn't had a truck since. He had a sixty-two Rambler for awhile, but that wasn't the same.

* * *

Inside the theater he slides a five-dollar bill across the counter to the cashier. She is young and lovely, and Walden smiles, knowing that the braces, pimples, and dandruff are only temporary. But she stares back coldly. This is the last of his money, but she accepts it anyway, and pressing a button, she forces the counter to spit up a purple ticket. Another button spills two quarters down a small chute to a circular tray where they lie motionless. She counts out two singles: "...and two makes five. Thank you," she says to Walden's money. It is unsettling for him to discover that the world has reached the point when teenagers will only touch paper money. But he points this out to no one and hurries along to find a seat.

* * *

Walden has found a good seat in the center section not too close to the front. By sitting in the middle of the row he avoids the awkwardness of having to let people pass. For if he stands to allow someone by, his timing will inevitably be off and they will both collide. If he remains seated, they will step on his feet. Husbands leer at him with jealous accusations as he makes room for their wives. Older women arriving alone pass dangerously close to him. It is a situation to be avoided whenever possible, especially tonight. Tonight Walden is celebrating. As of this date Walden has existed on earth in his present form for a score and ten years. He has kept it to himself.

In the darkness of the cartoon he slips off his boots to thaw out his toes. Only the toes in his left boot are cold. There is no real reason to take off the other one, but he loves them both equally and he will not discriminate against the wounded one. After all, these boots are not surplus like so many others in Fairbanks. Walden got this pair new. He traded a switch knife to a supply sergeant for them. The knife came from Mexico. On one side of the handle was a tiny scorpion embedded in clear lucite; on the other side it said JUAREZ. On one side of each boot was a small air valve; on the other side it said DO NOT INFLATE WHILE AIRBORNE.

Continuing his preparations, he makes a nest of his parka against the back of the seat. The parka is very dear to him also. He ripped it off personally, before leaving the Aerospace Team.

Walden never complains about his time in the service; the Air Force had been good to him. Training for instance: mechanic on C-130 transports, "HERCS" they called them. And travel: two years in southeast Asia. It was a good job. Walden liked the predictability of machinery, and the Herc was a predictable machine. He once sent a silk pillow to his mother with a picture of a Herc on it. The background was blue like the sky and the plane was sewn in silver thread. Below the airplane the word DhaNang was embroidered in gold. She never had mentioned how she liked it.

Walden's Air Force training started to pay off when he got to Alaska. They discovered oil on the North Slope in sixty-eight and there were lots of Hercs flying out of Fairbanks. He got a job with no sweat. He never forgot what the recruiting sergeant had told him: "Herc training is worth two years of college." He'd been right. After the work slowed down and Walden was laid off, he sat down and figured it out. If he had saved everything while he had been working he could have put himself through two years of college.

In seventy-four the pipeline work started, and the Hercs were flying again, but the freight outfits were getting their mechanics wholesale from Georgia. Walden hasn't lost heart, figures when the cold weather comes the outsiders will leave. It is now mid December.

* * *

When the movie begins, Walden is taken aback. He has never been able to endure realism. But he will tough it out. He can identify with Dustin Hoffman and Steve McQueen.

In the liquid heat of the South American jungle, McQueen is continually being beaten up while Hoffman gives himself hemorrhoids with a small metal tube which contains a seemingly inexhaustible supply of money and other incidentals. Walden can't help observing that, with a tube like that, Batman would never need a belt.

One scene especially amuses Walden. The prisoners are lined up receiving work assignments from a grizzled man behind a desk. Dustin Hoffman has bribed a guard to get easy jobs for himself and Steve McQueen, but something has gone wrong and they're

being sent to a hard labor camp. A similar experience recently happened to Walden. Someone gave him a tip on who to see at the Alyeska personnel office. Hoping to make a good impression, he borrowed a flowered western shirt and a pair of straight levis. What luck, Walden thought, entering the office, the man at the desk was wearing the same shirt. "So you're Walden Pond."

"Yes, that's right," Walden replied, trying not to appear biased.

"And you think you can walk in here, dressed like that and pick up a free ticket into the middle class. Well, boy, you ain't foolin' nobody. Look at your belt." Walden did as he was told.

"What about it?"

"I don't see no flashy buckle, no steer head, no semi truck, no Caterpillar Tractor. You think I'd miss somethin' like that?" He turned to the man at the next desk. "Look here, Rainard, this fella thinks we're gonna miss somethin' like that." The other man shook his head. "Sorry, son, but we can't use you."

In another scene Steve McQueen has escaped. He is taken in by a tribe of Indians and is sleeping with a beautiful young girl. Walden is sleeping with a beautiful young savage, too. Her name is Janet. She is from the Jackson tribe of Santa Barbara, her father is an orthodontist there. She has good straight teeth and a dirty mouth, and insists on being called Pond's woman. But there are problems. Sometime during the two years they have been together she became "Aware." Now she is totally aware, so she broods; over the conditon of the ozone layer; over the direction Rock has taken in the seventies; she broods over everything. Walden isn't aware, but he can live with it. It's her nature thing that he thinks has gotten out of hand. It has reached the point where she seldom washes, and when she does she won't use soap, "chemicals" she says. No longer will she shave body hair, finds the custom "barbaric." Yet she will brush her teeth five times a day. Walden is no longer sure whether he is in love or has a perspiration fetish. He knows he should be rid of her, but Walden lives in a cold climate and stubbornly clings to warmth whenever he finds it. More than anything else he wants to get married, but Janet would never buy it.

* * *

Fifteen minutes into Robin Crusoe USN, Walden's seat is

empty. It has been years since he could believe in Dick Van Dyke. The frozen surface of the parking lot sucks the heat from his boots, but he pays no attention. He feels good, the feature has ended happily with Papillon floating to freedom, born up by a raft of coconuts. He knows there is someone he should thank, but can think of no one in particular so he continues to the corner.

Walden waits at the light. Caravans of yellow trucks glide by on plumes of blue exhaust. The windows are frost-free like the refrigerator ads promise. Behind the glass, smiling faces look down at Walden. They look like pleasant, friendly people. The story goes: "Why do Alyeska people roll up the brims of their Stetsons? So they can fit three of them in a yellow truck."

Across the street, MacDonald's parking lot is filled with yellow trucks. Icy vapors billow up around them until they seem to dissolve. There is a law in Fairbanks against idling an unattended vehicle, but Walden is a peaceful sort, he will make no arrests.

Through the glass still more lines of men are visible. Orderly and uniform, they file back from the stainless steel counter. Inside Walden takes his place at the end of a line. The girls who hurry to serve the customers are exceptionally clean, so is the floor and the tile walls. The counter itself gleams. It is Walden's turn at the counter now. Everyone is smiling as if delighted by all the cleanliness. A child with a beautifully clean teeth is giving him a Big Mac, large fries, and chocolate shake. It is all packaged in a clean white paper bag. He offers her two-fifty, and she takes it, but he doesn't leave right away, he has only taken a step to the side. It is obvious to everyone but Walden that this action is causing confusion in the lines. He is trying to figure out whether to eat here or take the food home; Janet thinks Big Macs are the purest form of poison. Slowly he becomes aware of his situation. The edge has gone off the communal spirit of the place, and the mood has turned sour. At last Walden realizes that he has become a restriction, impeding the smooth flow of commerce, he knows his business is finished, he must leave.

* * *

In the purple dusk beneath the mercury vapor lights Walden stands clutching his white paper bag to his chest as if it were a

small child. He is considering the unpleasantness of hitch-hiking home while the heat drains away from his Big Mac. It is a dissatisfying thought and his mind turns to Papillon drifting on his coconut raft in a quiet sea.

* * *

Moments later he is driving down Airport Way in a yellow truck. Warm air boils from the defroster vents. On the soft naugahide next to the white paper bag a coffee-brown Stetson rests quietly. At the Cushman Street intersection he puts it on and heads south.

On the dash Walden finds Dotty West, Merl Haggard, and Buck Owens. He leaves Dotty and Buck and plugs Merl into the tape deck. The lights and the ice fog fall behind as the Hag sings of hard times and wild women. Walden feels good, relaxed and content. The power steering yields to his touch, the truck floats over the corrugated surface of the snow packed on the highway.

A few miles from town Walden pulls into a turn out at the side of the road. He climbs out of the cab and walks a few steps from the truck to relieve himself. He watches his stream cut into the snow and disappear through a ring of steam into the ground. Walden knows this place. From here a foot trail leads out across a badly abused piece of ground to a small lake. At the head of the lake is a cabin. Walden can see the light in the windows flicker as Janet moves about inside.

It was while cutting a hole in the ice of the lake, some years ago that Walden heard God speak. "How you doing, Walden? Everything alright?" The sound seemed to be coming from the hole in the ice, so Walden got down on his hands and knees. A ring of cold vapor curled up around his face, but he could see nothing.

"I'm okay I guess," Walden said to the hole, but there was no answer. Later Walden figured it had only been loneliness tampering with his imagination, but he still isn't quite sure.

Walden takes a moment to look at the cabin and the lake, remembering the voice. Then, looking back down the road, he reaches for the door of the truck. The interior light welcomes him back to the warmth of the cab and he pulls out, still heading south.

Hurtling down the white strip of highway toward the gash in

the black spruce at the horizon, Walden reaches for his Big Mac. A faint reflection flashes red on the windshield in time with Merl's music, he ignores it.

* * *

Beyond the metered glint of red, beyond the glass, beyond the white road and the black forest, the aurora twists and bristles. It surges with quivering rhythms from one side of heaven to the other as if projected across the screen of a giant drive-in. And now, like the fade-out at the end, the white light waves, then ripples, forming, just for an instant, a single word against the darkness.

PROSPERITY



ONE DESCRIPTION

John Gilbert

TO LEAR:

One king and three daughters (Cornwall, Albany and France)
taught singing lessons keyed in minor puns;
they read from almanacs of sifted grains
and lived in mead halls open to the night.
Sand gathered castles washed away
slipped on icons, beached by whaler's cries.
They conjured alphabets from runic caravans
sold costly spices and hairpin lace
then sunk it all in gilt black boats.
Tarnished faces mourn the ceaseless tides
and footsteps follow homeward
from the shore. They toast
the kind whose sermons
brought them there
and they
all fall
down.

your time

tired men
in chairs
around the stove
stare
at the night school
of fire
behind its door.

the diffraction grating

Up close, the grating is seen to be made of many parallel grooves stretching out to infinity like a record of silence. This emptiness can be filled; we can place things on these lines; words are OK, but let's take light as an example. When the wavelength of the vibrations passing between two reflecting bodies is equal to the distance between them, that color is reinforced. As this distance varies, feelings are revealed in a manner not unlike a sleight-of-hand artist fanning a deck of cards. In the dark, as one's attitude changes, both are swept by the possibility of rainbows.

We talk;
your thoughts persist,
like soap bubbles floating down
to mark points on the infinite plain
of the surrealists.
They are never my points;
I could run between them blindfolded,
and do.
Our gestures pass through each other—
as would my comb, through your hair.

diffusion No. 2

She doesn't like you.
Your car breaks down
in the rain.
You begin walking.
At first, the rain only spots your jacket;
later, everything is soaked.

Bob Forbes

Contradictions
tangle up my mind.
Houdini escapes
by inversion;
as he works free,
the audience's arms are knotted.
Still, there is that initial freedom
from explanation;
the "volume" is off and
people are a foreign language.

dawn

Shadows of her hair
on the page
labor late into
the twilight of lines,
making tracks toward the dawn
of a past thought
whose frayed edge,
dipped in many-colored inks,
brushed across the day

IVY

The ivy molds itself
To the form of the house
It is a sort of
Parasitic lovemaking
A voracious overwhelming
Search for identity
So slowly as to be
Virtually unnoticed
It cannibalizes its
Brother, the dead corpse
Of many trees that form
The building's skeleton.
The ivy molds itself
To the solidity of the house
There it gains a
False security: the two exist
In a long and lingering
Pact of suicide.

J. Farewell

UNDERSTANDING BUFFALO . . .

The grating looks up
with haste.

Its collection of
things-at-the-bottom of things
is sooted beyond belief;

A street sign is being hung,
At an angle to the lamp post.

City Hall Facade
is summarily brown mauve:

This In Buffalo, New York,
Where soon

Delivery trucks with ads for Pink Catawba wine
move regimentally at dawn into morning mud,

Disguised,
with dew on the petals
of their black,
synthetic rubber
windshield wipers.

J. Farewell

BUXTEHUDE'S "KOMM HEILLIG GEIST HERRE GOTT?"

The Spirit's marriage to this music was conducted beneath
green boughs.

Officiating, a poet of thin lines wore only that which
tradition requires.

The bride and groom were naked and feasted on heart of antelope
and sunflower seeds
before ceremony called them from the pool of umbrage.

He then put on his shoes. She
modest wore a lei of tansy and carried a sheaf of feathers.

Several millions were in attendance;
Each carried a metaphor in his right hand.

Climbing the tower, through cobwebs and broken bottles,
we saw this through dusty windows

and it is not at all clear, now that the great organ
is silent, why it was not done before
we came carrying provisions for a long
trip, or whether they were waiting

For us at all.

CAVALRY

You are sleeping on your back with one hand curled around your ear. I listen, too, but cannot make out the piccolos and snare drums of your dreaming. Something moves. My eyes travel down your knees and shins; there, in the loose hairs of your ankle wanders a tiny appaloosa. Below an empty saddle his flanks are pied rust and black. His nostrils glimmer. In the tossing of his head I see the frayed end of a tether. He gallops up your thigh, looks, and runs on. One disc-smooth hoof gently stamps your navel. He prances the curve of your breastbone; his tail whisks your chin. With a sudden gathering, a folding of his elegant legs, he sails over your face to land silhouetted on your forehead. I do not breathe as he rears; his neck pulls strong below a wild soft eye. He paws once, noses your hairline, and then pushes into your hair. The falling sweep of it hides him. You are still slowbreathing to the clean melody of piccolos, the rhythm of distant guns.

TYL EULENSPIEGEL

With a quick, crooked smile which pulled his eyes long and blue he showed me the pines in the afternoon. His face came smiling at me from around the bark, a coin of a face there, flashing through the dark, furred branches . . . then away, to the next stand. I saw the ease of his mouth round in calling, "Come here." The pines were cold, moldy with resin and old feathers. No wind came into their leaning. As I stooped to touch a tiny fox bone cupped by roots, his face peered down from an odd cluster of branches. A tapered ear, luminous in the sunstripe on the trunk, came toward me. "I hear your blood moving!" he said, and his eyes went smiling, narrowing to the color of fishscales on newspaper.

THE BURN

There had been so little color to it, she thought. The color had been in their minds, each person's fire a different shade of wild, black-tinged brilliance. Butch kept talking of it as a heavy red which hollowed the inside, running raw at each window. Her own picture was made up of hundreds of tiny searing tongues, all fusing from pale gold to vermillion, darting lightly, eagerly, at loose material. And they who stood watching at the big window must have thought it, each to his own. Against that sky, dulled to a plummish smoke color, pushing down on them like some great discolored palm, there had been nothing to see but, miles away, the clean vertical line of the weaving firetruck ladder. Yet they knew he was burning: perhaps the air rushing in under their closed door brought the faintest sweet smell of his tissue. The wheel chair would heat slowly into a white grill beneath his inert legs. So they talked about his peacock, who lived with him.

"That bird'll get out. Animals always do. They know somehow what's coming."

"If he can squeeze through that little open window in the bathroom, I don't know. That trailer is so small."

Butch said, "That bird is smarter than hell, though." She thought, we're all seeing that, too. A peacock billing himself up onto the tub rim, to balance a second, to flap, weakly, instinctively, his blue-green wings. She saw the delicacy of the feathered tail hanging down the wall, the scrabbling of claws on the sill, the lurch into the free, dimmed air, the starburst of fear deep in its eye.

"Do you know," Lois said suddenly after a small silence, "he can distinguish between Ritz and Sunshine crackers. I've seen him pecking and tasting like a real connoisseur."

"Yep, he'll get out," Butch nodded. "Every goddamn feather of him, I bet."

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Sutton Hoo War Helmet

THE BAROQUE DESIGN OF *BEOWULF*

"As in all baroque designs, it is impossible to say whether the positive forms or the negative intervals are the more essential factors in the design. Both are mutually necessary; and the effect is achieved by the collaboration of the two principles of light and dark, solid and void. This ambiguity is one of the constant features of Nordic art, whether Scythian, Celtic, or Germanic."

—Roger Hinks in *Carolingian Art*

In the midst of a huge, shadowy and primeval world, a Danish king named Hrothgar decides to build a great hall which men will hear of forever. It will be roofed with gold, and in it Hrothgar will give good things to others as freely as God has been generous to him. The new hall, Heorot, is duly built and Hrothgar's people are happy there as in a newly created Eden, when suddenly a "grim guest" comes from the dark, aroused by the sound of the harp. His name is Grendel, and he comes in hatred of fellowship. No one can stop him from killing the king's chosen warriors and drinking their blood. He takes over Heorot and "rules" alone by night for twelve years. Far away, Beowulf, a young prince of the Swedish Geats, hears about the hall of friendship rendered useless by a monster, and he comes to fight Grendel, in unarmed combat because Grendel "does not know the use of weapons." Beowulf succeeds in cleansing Heorot of the monster; during the wrestling match, so violent that the great hall itself is threatened, Beowulf tears off Grendel's arm, and the monster flees howling into the misty moors to die. The next day and evening the Danes are relaxed and happy—too soon, because Grendel has a mother. The rejoicing in Heorot is once more an innocent prelude to tragedy, and it is the king's best friend who is killed this time. Beowulf hears of this the next morning and sets out at once to fight the mother in her own lair, a damp, hall-like cavern entered through a dismal lake. This is a more difficult and uncertain fight. Beowulf attempts to use a sword, but it fails him; he does not know that the monsters cannot be touched by ordinary weapons. Grendel's mother nearly kills him; when her

first dagger-blow is deflected by Beowulf's armour, she straddles him and strikes again. But the firelight leaps up and Beowulf glimpses a giant sword hanging on the wall. He twists away, snatches the sword, and manages to behead the water-witch, striking through her neck-bone. When exploring the depths of the underwater lair he finds Grendel lying dead, and beheads him also—this suggests that the monsters are trolls, which may only be slain finally by beheading. Beowulf takes Grendel's head and the golden sword-hilt as trophies to the king; the blade of the sword has been melted by the heat of the monster's blood.

At the feast that night the king, Hrothgar, makes a speech, after gazing for a time upon the golden sword-hilt. Power, like strength or wealth, can make a man heedless, he says, so that he is open to the unexpected, both within and without. Take Heremod, once king of the Danes: He became great, but then turned miserly, and his death showed how futile that was! God is often generous to men, but this sometimes deceives them, first into complacency and then into unsatisfied desire (like Heremod's). Yet change always comes, whether as illness, disaster, or death. Take me, Hrothgar: I was also a great king, and made peace on all my borders and ruled well, then Grendel came. Thank God I see his head here now! (The moral of Hrothgar's sermon, if God is generous to you, then *give*, is to be understood by those in Heorot in this context of inevitable change. In the human reciprocity that imitates divine giving, it is the virtue itself that is not subject to fate, hence it is "eternal." Hrothgar's philosophy is like an axle upon which the poem turns.)

Beowulf goes home richer in fame, treasures and good advice (which is, like gold, a gift of rulers, equally sought). But as he recounts his Danish adventures to his own lord, the king of the Geats, it seems that in retrospect the monsters have become more folkloristic and the political situation in Heorot more real. Late in life Beowulf too becomes a ruler. When he is old, as Hrothgar was, change comes unexpectedly. A thief awakens strife by stealing a golden cup from a treasure guarded by a dragon—dragons, of course, are the arch non-givers. The aroused dragon comes out from his barrow raging and burning indiscriminately. His wrath is

not specific, like that of the Grendel-kind, but general, like that of a giant hornet whose nest has been disturbed. He burns the king's gift-hall, the seat of human generosity, and thereby endangers the value-structure of the kingdom; the gift-throne of a Germanic hall has nearly the value of an altar, and the gifts that are presented from the throne simultaneously bestow praise and confirm allegiance like a modern wedding ring or a medal of honor. Beowulf, whose special gift from God is the ability to slay the monsters who threaten the gift-throne, this center of human allegiance, must fight the dragon, old as he is, with the help of a young kinsman, Wiglaf. Beowulf kills the dragon, but the dragon also wounds him fatally. Yet Beowulf dies happy, thinking he has won the dragon's gold, and hence a new gift-hall, for his people. But they promptly proceed, in their own generosity and love for Beowulf, to bury the dragon-gold with him, "as useless to men as it was before." This loss of the gold so sacrificially won is the final ironic futility of the poem, but at the same time the treasure also is a great gift of love and honor in the face of fate, first from Beowulf to his people, then from the people to their dead king. Human solidarity wins even over devastating loss as Beowulf's people, faced now with exile, sing an elegy in praise of their king.

This is the main design of the story, but there is much shading of detail. For example, within the frames of the lavish ship-burial of Shield Shefing, the founding king of Denmark, at the beginning of the poem, and Beowulf's own funeral pyre at the end, the poem moves from a sort of "dreamtime" towards real history. *Beowulf* has always been considered by Scandinavian historians as a mine of information and confirmation for things known from archaeology and hinted at in sagas. But this real history occurs, curiously, in the part of the poem dominated by the most mythical of the monsters, the dragon. As the surrounding events move from myth into history, the monsters move away from the human towards the symbolic, and even the locations of the fights may be said to follow this progression away from the human center: darkened hall, underwater hall, barrow (treasure-grave)—each fight takes place farther away from the life represented by Heorot in feast-time. In addition, we, the post-revelation audience, are given a glimmer of Scriptural history which sheds light on the monster-fights: they are part of the great

Feud dominating human history from Eden until the Apocalypse. But of course this level of the history of mankind is only between us and the poet; it is suppressed in the world of the poem. The sixth century Scandinavians apprehend the monsters coming unexpected from the dark much more "existentially"!

The three monsters are associated with the void that stands in contrast to the lighted hall of friendship. The Grendels are like that "ghost" known to some cultures even today, which, though it was human when alive, is now no longer quite human in shape, is *solid*, and has enormous glowing eyes which, if they catch you in their glare, will quite literally petrify you. You can't move unless it turns away—which, as it gains strength from the blood of the living, it is not likely to do! (Arctic villages abound with tales of much monsters!) The fire-dragon is a "worm" on the model of the Earth-serpent: it is fifty feet long, winged, and fire-breathing as well as "wrapped in flames" as it hurtles coiling through the night sky. It is beautiful as an aurora, but terrifyingly impersonal in its destructiveness, like fate itself. All three monsters mark a contrast of increasing starkness to the generous humanness of the pagan Scandinavians, especially Hrothgar, Beowulf, and Wiglaf. Hrothgar's metaphysical problem, "things change," is symbolized by these unexpected monsters. The human answer to this problem is provided by young Wiglaf as he sees the life of his dear king and kinsman threatened by the dragon. Before rushing to risk his own life with Beowulf, he states the value that lies behind the ritual of giving, behind everything human: "Fellowship is a thing that does *not* change, for a man who thinks rightly!"

ALIEN

It is a place
Quite other. Even the moon
Must be less foreign to our race
Than under-water,

Flooded with light at noon.
My daughter
Hovers half-way down
Like a giant spider spinning out

Webs of light. Is laughter
Light in that world? The spout
Of her rubber snorkel breaks the water,
And back she goes, with bubbles

Chuckling after, and all about
Her happy bending body wobbles
The net of light, recovering from that clout,
Reforming

Crystalline shapes. Then shivers, doubles,
Shatters. Squirming
Onto the pool's edge, she heaves, is out. No troubles
In our world, either—

One might have thought the gravity alarming,
Or the sound waves. But she just takes a breather
And lies there, warming,
And as she lies

Calls out to me (to me!) "Oh, mother!"
And butterflies
Bend swarming to this being, oh indeed quite other,
To sip from her liquid face.

Robert B. Weeden

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

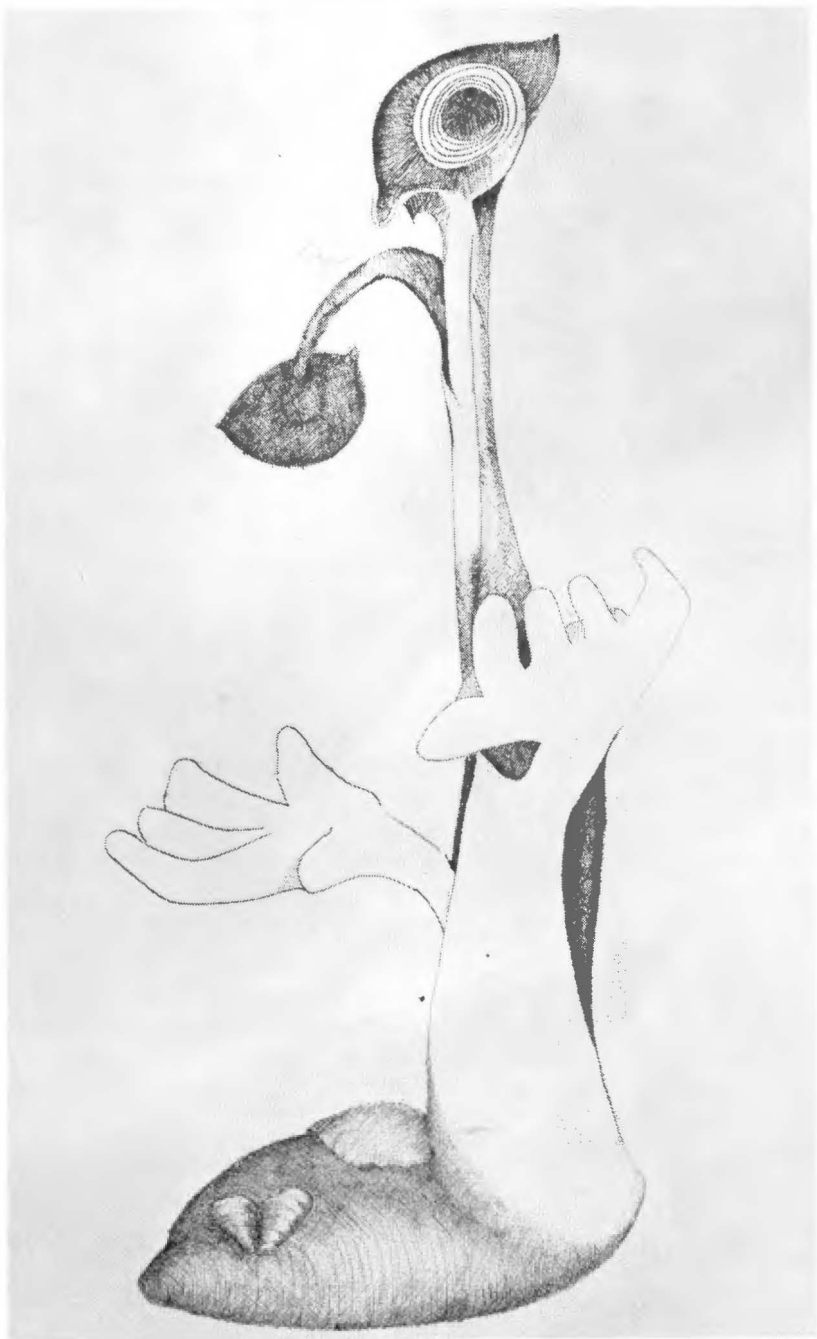
Excuse me sir
I turned sharply to see them standing under grey stone
He wore a brown coat once buttoned over a greenish shirt
No hat covering his ears
Against the gritty wind
His hair was thin and grey eyes direct but dead
He simply looked
His wife stood slightly back
As though he could still provide shelter from the wind
I knew I would talk with them
On a rare city visit from my life poverty is a novelty
No, not that, a confrontation
With no expectation
She simply looked
I nodded and startled them into hope
By posing to stay
We need to eat he said Would you . . .
But then he waited
Where is home?
Thinking of Frost I murmured inside
If you can only get there they will have to let you in
In Florida he said frost has killed the oranges
Here there is no work
All our money lost in waiting
What can you do?
Dishes she replies for the first time
But here there are so many to do them
I saw they couldn't survive uncertainty
And I gave them an hour or so of my cerebral work
Green and rustling it meant less to me by far
Than the clasped hand
The thought of warmth and bread
Held her head higher
The Lord will help you she said

And I smiled embarrassed for us all
To think that He should note so small a thing
I walked away to my banquet
Casually given and casually received.

Later the night had changed for me
In the concert hall a thousand of the City eddied into the aisles
Not vain (it was only midweek and vanity
Hung in the scented closet
Waiting for the Sunday performance)
They simply looked
Proud and confident
They knew the downward slope of red carpet
The soft chairs were familiar
They knew how to tell the concertmaster from second fiddle
The sounds of Bruckner began
Like brooks in cultured German forests
The brass strings the restrained drum
The thrum of velvet cellos
At intermission my clasped hand still throbbed in memory
Delighted applause belied the young critics
Who spoke impressively of other performances
Alone
I simply looked
One eye enjoyed the display of civility
The other outside
Seeing grey stone
Feeling gritty wind
Hearing two souls crying
While their faces simply looked.

ROBIN

Flight extinguished in
The wind, a flame against
The picture window, now
I watch your body
Left behind--drooping, flickering,
Settling slowly into death.
Helpless. I'm wishing life
Were embers, coals: your
Feathered breast so very like
Wet sparks that sink
Into the rain-soaked grass.
Damp, stiffened embers. Robin,
I would rekindle
You so gently, coax
Your spirit fiercely,
With my breath.



FOR JUDY LIT

John Gilbert

Tom Lowenstein

These pieces are non-explanatory Footnotes to Mottoes from a game of divination. Consisting of a three-part series of 160 utterances, the game has been published in England as a small book, titled *Booster*.

When eventually each of the Mottoes has its Footnote(s) (some relevant, some intentionally contradictory or misleading), the system will be cut loose internally, all reference generalized. Marginal coincidence of association between text and text will then be mingled: a weak-knit relativism which may already be observed in the eroded correspondences between these mottoes, and their scarcely dangling appendages:

Motto 52: Hobgoblins in the grain of the floor, Shadows, nightmare, ghouls in trees & walls etc. flow from your mind. These are the literature of illusion. See things as they are, & you'll abolish horror, if you want to.

52. 'Madame de la Cauchemare est arrive. Or is it Fraulein, Miss or Ma'am? The Sisters Cauchemare: Sophie Cauchemare and Miss C. Or, "I had the honour of calling on Mlle. V in her father's *loge* last evening at *Les Pecheurs des Perles*: she was a vision in her gown of skulls." Or, "Prinz Hugo Nightmare Z.U. and his charming squire 'The Monk' were at Baron N's to celebrate the equinox. He looks so much better for his expedition to the Hartz this autumn." And "Here's Count W with his first wife in her pretty chains. She's learnt to run remarkably on all fours with the dogs. Oh, and that's the 15th Earl of Nightmare from Chesterfield. In fact he passed on half way through last century, but his children found the most delightful taxidermist, and he's still the hit at all the fashionable spas. And here comes la Principessa della Pipistrella with her charming coterie . . . "'

Motto 72: The buddha sat down & got up again, sat down and got up again, sat down & got up, sat down & got up again, sat down again & got up, sat down & got up again, sat down again & got up, sat down & got up again, sat down, got up, sat down again, got up, sat down, got up, sat down again, got up, sat, got up, again sat, got up again, sat, got up, sat, got up, sat down and got up more or less every day.

72. Soaked with ashes, the saint hobbles round the desert after an unwonted downpour. His thin toes crunch against each other in the watery sand, and his loin-cloth flops annoyingly between his bird-like thighs. Brushing the hair from his eyes, the holy man looks up suspiciously at the vast clean desert sky, and wonders where the deluge came from. Not a cloud is to be seen, although 'heaven' trembles with evaporation, and a giant rainbow stands rigidly over the nearest mountain. Speculating cautiously as to whether he's been caught in a genuine mirage, 'Blow me,' he grunts, 'if it isn't hotter than the devil, already,' and the sand underfoot begins its habitual scraping on his lacerations, as if refortified to test his discipline. Suppressing the vague memory of a delicious ointment he once picked up in Abdera or Sybaris from an itinerant Thracian, he returns to his rough cushion of deliverance. 'Mortify it, mortify it,' he clicks thirstily: his tongue whispers like a dead herb, and throws a sharp dust through his lungs. His breath whistles. He shuts his eyes and locks back into contemplation of his wickedness. Unnoticed through the desert, millions of shrimp-like flowers spring open between rocks, and make a quick appraisal of mortality before shrivelling.

Gary H. Holthaus

THE DYING OF THE ICE
SPRING: YUKON RIVER

Ice
Knows the truth
Before we do
Can feel the edges
Crumble, the center
Betray itself to the river
Too late to renew
Its strength in the dark

Any sun now
Divides the ice;
Slender fractures
Lift heavy sounds—
Eskimo drums from Emmonak
Waking our dreams of winter
Rising against itself

At the mercy of warmth
The ice breaks,
Slides past whispering,
"Salmon . . ."

We are left empty
Our wills immobile
Alone with the voice
Of a seal smoothly born
Announcing another
Spring

ESKIMO DANCERS

—for Rusty and Laurie

We weave strange ornaments
Into our music; skin drums
Tolling the movement of men and seals

Our heads incline toward songs
As yet unsung; their notes
Crouch in tall grass,
They ride the wings of cormorants
Vibrate in voiceless throats of voles

We sing to the long light of days
In summer lingering,
Praise autumn with songs
Of shadows drowning our rivers

Composing our lives in time
To the losing of seasons
We dance against darkness
Create a new spring
Make music the measure
Of life in the land

FOR MICHAEL

I have waited a winter to write this poem to you.
From those first moments,
When you belonged to whiteness, the tubes
Coiled into your body, the nurses
Who pricked your heels until they bled.
And it came to me, as I watched
Your inverted chest push toward the world,
How much of the arctic was in you.

Now your lungs have grown to meet you.
Ladies in supermarkets celebrate your rebirth.
And these are the normal miracles,
And what can I say before them.
As you beat your fists against the glass
Bringing leaves from black pools,
Dogs from houses, the sun hovering,
The buds on the birch trees bursting red.

JOHN P. FAREWELL has just recently started to write again after a hiatus of several years. Raised in the Adirondacks in New York, he attended Plattsburgh State, Syracuse University, and SUNY at Buffalo where he earned a Ph.D. in chemistry in 1969. He presently lives in Stamford, Connecticut with his wife, Judy, and two daughters, and does research with American Cyanamid.

BOB WEEDEN, who teaches conservation at UA Fairbanks, came to Alaska in 1959 to work for the Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game. Now 44, he has been with the university seven years, with a year and a half off in 1975-76 to work in the Office of the Governor. Bob's wife Judith is a respected potter. They have three Alaska-born children.

DAVID STARK: "I have two sons, one of whom is Michael, run sled dogs, teach creative writing and sundry other courses at the University of Alaska, have an M.F.A. from the University of California, Irvine, and have published in various quarterlies. People have told me I have rather nice green eyes."

SERENA FAE MORGAN: "I am slightly wacked-out, have one tom cat, a lot of books, and am currently writing—and attempting to sell—science fiction. I macrame and draw and read for recreation, dance for energy release. I am young, single, and planning on staying both."

GARY H. HOLTHAUS is Executive Director of the Alaska Humanities Forum.

CAROL KNAPP JOHNSON: "WANTED: human being to enjoy Chaucer for breakfast, Cervantes for lunch, Shakespeare at dinner, and a walk with Emily in the evening."

BOB FORBES: "Really writing for one year (a few isolated experiments previously). Object: to explore relations/connections in events that exist in my mind and usually not in reality. Interested in practical synesthesia. Sound/language poles of my esthetic of past 3 years: Axis, Bold As Love (Jimi Hendrix), AIR (Tom Clark). Want to explore where music and speech merge. Like to talk with people about modes of perception and explanation. Lived in Fairbanks 1959-1972; have returned in summers since then to work."

TOM LOWENSTEIN: "My previous works are: *Our After-fate* (poems, London 1971); *Eskimo Poems From Canada & Greenland* (University of Pittsburgh Press) 1974; *Booster* (The Many Press, London, 1977; *The Death of Mrs. Owl*, poems, Anvil Press, London 1977). I am at present working on a book of histories from Tikigaq (Point Hope), to be published by the University of California Press, in the distant (I hope) future."

JOHN GILBERT "Hands are the frayed ends of the dumb limbs of time."

MORGAN JANE WILLS is a graduate student in English and Russian at the Fairbanks campus of the University of Alaska.

RON CROWE is Editor of the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska. He and his wife Kandy are just back from a vacation in Europe.

KARI TARRANT lives in Deerfield, Illinois.

ELLIOT FRIED teaches English at California State University, Long Beach.

LYRIC OZBURN's artworks have received many awards. She attends classes at UA, Fairbanks.

ANN FOX CHANDONNET has published two books of poetry, *Incumbula* and *The Wife and Other Poems*. She has also edited "The Alaska Woman" Magazine and written two cookbooks. Ann lives in the Anchorage area with husband, Fern, and their sons, Yeves and Alex.

JEAN ANDERSON is a graduate student in English at UA, Fairbanks.

L.E. LEONARD was born in Middleton, New York, in 1945 and later became the husband of Linda Leonard, the sled dog musher. He has published fiction in England and is apparently bent on continuing the practice here.

ELYSE GUTTENBERG is Editor of *permafrost*.

MARIJANE OSBORN has a Ph.D. in English Literature and lives and writes in England in a 1699-vintage home, Moulterbeck.

JOHN HAINES is an eminent poet and former Alaskan whose published works include, *Winter News*, *The Stone Harp*, *Twenty Poems*, and *Leaves and Ashes*. Haines just got back from Scotland and is slowly adjusting to the USA..

M.R. (RITA) WAGGONER recently left her teaching duties at UA, Fairbanks, to begin work on a Ph.D.



Photograph by Elyse Guttenberg